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Citation: Jenson, Adam, Swords, Jon and Jeffries, Mike (2010) Geographies of Skateboarding - Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead, UK. Human Geography, 3 (3). pp. 147-150. ISSN 1942-7786

Published by: Institute for Human Geography

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/194277861000300313>  
<<https://doi.org/10.1177/194277861000300313>>

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places them on a lower scale of importance vis-à-vis her aim of documenting women's involvement in the armed resistance. So to some extent the overwhelming importance given to women's experiences as armed fighters works against Strobl's stated aims of challenging "the hierchization of resistance into an 'active' military category and a 'passive' category that includes everything else" (p xiv). Partisanas does a good job of bringing women into the 'active' category but to some extent fails to challenge the hierarchy itself because of its predominant focus on military, armed activities.

If, like Ingrid Strobl and many of her interviewees, we are somewhat disappointed that these brave but temporary role alterations do not give rise to more lasting changes in gender relations, we need to consider the fact that gender relations are about men as much as they are about women; and the activities that women are overwhelmingly responsible for are essential for our survival, yet they are largely undervalued or not valued at all. We therefore need to also focus our attention to increasing the value of 'women's work'. The armed resistance could not have taken place without the 'auxiliary' roles that women were largely responsible for: liaison, scouting, providing food, assistance, information. The resistance would not have been able to function without these essential activities. The same goes for the other 'everyday' activities that women are largely responsible for: cooking, caring, cleaning, childrearing. These are all essential to our collective survival and the reproduction of the system within which we live. We need to value these activities and acknowledge how fundamental they are. Moreover, studies that seek to understand change in gender relations need to take into account men. If there are no changes in men's identities, how can we expect a lasting change in women's role in society? Both men's and women's identities need to change if we are to create a more equal balance between women's and men's roles and responsibilities.

Temporality is here clearly important for developing a deeper understanding of how change happens. Despite the challenge partisanas posed to the status quo, the underlying structures did not change partly because the period of conflict is experienced as a time

of exceptions and inequalities are reinstated with the return to 'normality'. Patriarchal norms returned not only because they were never really fundamentally challenged by the actions of partisanas but also because of the absence of a collective activism based on explicit feminist politics.

Clearly it is impossible to cover everything even in an extensive book such as Partisanas. In this book Strobl does make an important contribution to feminist geographers' understanding not only of the armed resistance during WWII and women's role in liberation struggles but also whether radical changes in gender roles are accompanied by more long-lasting transformations in gender relations. Taken together with the other literature on gender and post-conflict countries, this book presents some answers to the critical questions on the role of women in armed struggle, to the challenges that women face when taking up arms and to our understanding of the relationship between the construction of knowledge and existing power hierarchies in the societies that produce that knowledge.

# *GEOGRAPHIES OF SKATEBOARDING – NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE AND GATESHEAD, UK*

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## *The skaters of Tyneside*

This map is the result of a year-long research project on the geographies of skateboarding in Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead, UK. Skateboarders are often seen as invaders of urban space, subverting it for their own purposes, contrary to the normative actions of others. In the capitalist system, abstract space is created in which behaviour is prescribed and dictated, often for commercial consumption practices. Borden (2001) has suggested that the act of skateboarding the city rejects this use of urban space by implicitly critiquing space and architecture as a commodity. Through the reproduction of space as a play zone, skateboarders offer no monetary exchange value for the time which they spend at a location. This frequently leads to conflict with those seeking to control urban spaces designed for capitalist consumption.

Borden (2001) also describes how skateboarders can reproduce space through offering a temporary creative re-working of its time and space. This temporary appropriation of space can often transform it, so much so that it resembles a skateboard domain (Karsten and Pel, 2000). These spaces can be visited temporally over

a period of minutes or hours throughout a day, week or month. The frequency of the appropriation often resembles a skateboarder's recognition as to whether the location is good or bad. Often, spaces which are appropriated regularly became initiated into the skateboard community, gaining a special name, for example "harry bastard banks", an endearing name given to a skateboard location in Newcastle. If the location becomes popular it becomes known as spot, and is continually appropriated and written into skate folklore.

This project sought to understand the appropriation and reproduction of skate spaces in Newcastle and Gateshead. A participatory research approach was adopted, with skaters asked to map their city, with minimal prompting as to style or content. Over 100 skaters produced 120 psycho-geographic maps, ranging from self portraits to detailed journeys around Newcastle and Gateshead. A second stage of research structured observations in the form of skateboarding with Newcastle skateboarders. This included involvement in groups for a 'session', going to favourite 'spots',



For some, skateboarders are a public nuisance, vandals, the rebellious youth. For others, skateboarders portray freedom, enjoyment and creativity. However you consider them, skateboarders change the way we understand the places they appropriate within cities. Their actions reject normative uses of urban space as they flip, grind and ollie their way through a city not always visible to the layperson. Using spaces rejected by other social groups skaters transform the built environment into playgrounds and arenas: an innocuous set of steps becomes a beginner's rite of passage, a ledge is transformed into an grind block, a bank becomes a kicker...

We were interested to better understand how skateboarders use, explore and transform parts of Newcastle upon Tyne. We spoke to as many skaters as we could find and asked them to map their favourite spots. We could have written a report or journal article to tell everyone what we found, but not many people would read that. Instead, we created this skater's mappa mundi as an attempt to summarise what we found.

Contemporary Haymarket appears to be the least skated spot of the most popular sites highlighted by participants. Until recently, skateboarders would frequently use the steps and flat surface for tricks. In 2002, however, a by-law was passed excluding skaters from the area which included the threat of a £500 fine for transgression. It is not only since this restriction has been imposed that Haymarket has been the source of marginalisation, and social resistance. The participants revealed that they have faced a longstanding effort to maintain skateboarding at Haymarket. Respondent 4 told how he "used to get a lot of grief off the police". Despite this, skateboarders have always presented some form of resistance by continuing to skate and then "run away" when the police arrived. Borden suggests this temporary appropriation of space for a matter of minutes, which is repeated over weeks, is evidence to suggest that there is conflict between the social groups.

In his book about architecture and skateboarders, Iain Borden suggests skateboarders appropriate space by offering a creative re-working of its temporal and spatial characteristics. This is most clearly illustrated at the Law Courts. Skateboarding could not be further away from the intended use of the building, but the continuous appropriation of the double set of eight stairs over a number of years has created a hybrid space. During the day the steps provide lawyers access to the Court, in the evening they function as obstacles for tricks. The skateboarders, however, are aware they are not the dominant force within this informal relationship. To ensure the Law Courts remains a viable skate spot older skaters educate their less experienced counterparts about the access arrangements.



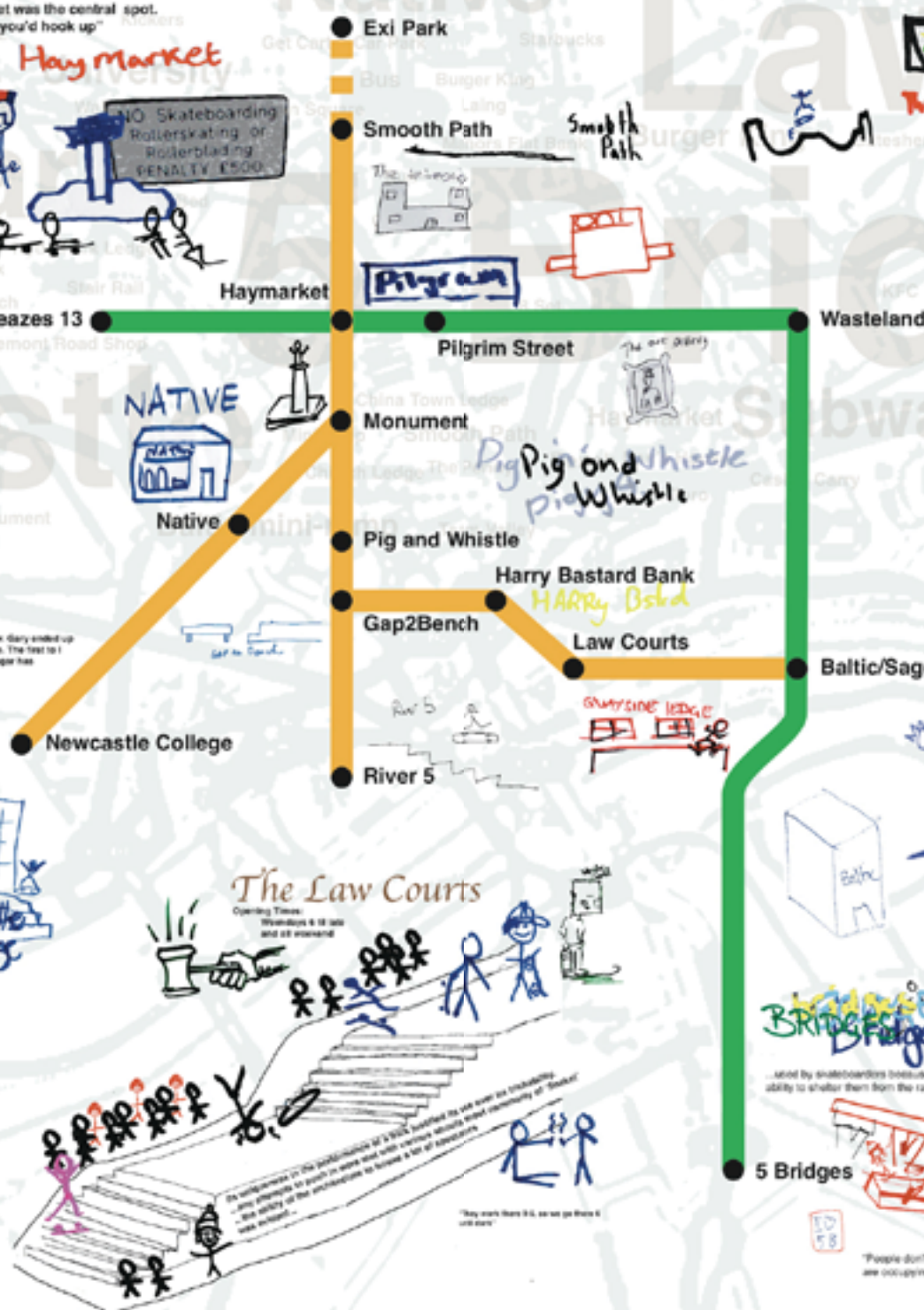
Exhibition Park is the fifth most popular spot highlighted in the maps. 'Exi' was built in the spring of 2004 and was intended to give the youth a space which was away from the commercial areas. It was constructed to relieve the pressure put on public space by young people. The skate park allowed designers to exclude skateboarders even further within the city centre through anti-skate measures, as they now have a "place" of their own. In the choice of location, skateboarders were built out of the city and pushed to the peripheries. The prescriptive nature of Exhibition Park, the lack of "buzz" from many separate obstacles, and the proliferation of non-skaters means the very space created for skateboarders is seen as exclusionary.



The Heaton Wasteland is another example of a creative re-working of space. The derelict area of land is a space rejected by most of society, but annexed for the city's skate scene by its use as a summer playground for skateboarders. In an entrepreneurial approach to ensure its enhanced use, skaters have set up a materials fund to help purchase concrete and tools to build new ramps, rails and blocks. The area is to be built on soon, but as one skater put it "We've had it for ten years, we'll just find somewhere else."



The appropriation of Five Bridges has produced a contrasting outcome to that of the Wasteland. Whereas both locations have been used by skateboarders for many years, Heaton is to be destroyed whilst Five Bridges has been transformed into a legitimate skate location recognised by Gateshead Council and the police. The temporal patterns of appropriation at Five Bridges contrast the Wasteland's: Heaton is used in the summertime, Bridges offers skaters somewhere to go all year around, no matter the weather.





and generally observing how things work from the 'inside'. This technique presented the opportunity to witness first hand complex socio-spatial relationships within groups of skaters. Finally, semi-structured interviews with 30 skaters were undertaken to gain further insight into the key skate spots, the activities therein, and skater's experiences of skating the city.

A fascinating world of conflict, collaboration, entrepreneurship, friendship and adventure was revealed. Given the visual and participatory nature of the research the following map was produced to try and capture the skate scene in Newcastle and Gateshead. This mappa mundi, along with all the maps created by skaters were exhibited during the summer at a local dance centre frequented by skaters, alongside histories of the city's legendary spots and photography by the skaters themselves. A launch event was held where skaters were invited to reflect upon their world as seen through our lens. We are pleased to say they recognized what we had reproduced, and enjoyed the chance to see their lives reflected in a way that respected their activities as constructive rather than destructive.

For more details see:

<http://playspacenewcastle.blogspot.com/>

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